

## LESSON 8: Epidemics: A Story of Loss

### OBJECTIVES:

- To gain a deeper understanding of the role of the epidemics of the 1600s (the Great Dying) and their impact on the Passamaquoddy people.
- To identify contributions from individuals to the community and create a parallel between current culture and past cultures.
- To understand that the Passamaquoddy culture has endured many hardships and is active today.

### ALIGNMENT WITH THE MAINE STATE LEARNING RESULTS

#### HISTORY:

##### Chronology

1. Describe the effects of historical changes on daily life.

##### Historical Knowledge, Concepts, and Patterns

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the causes and effects of major events in United States history and the connections to Maine history with an emphasis on events up to 1877.

### OVERVIEW:

Student groups will represent community members and define individual roles in a simulated community and family. As individuals succumb to disease, students will gain a deeper understanding of loss and make parallels to the events that affected the Passamaquoddy community.

Due to the sensitive nature of this subject matter, it may be best suited for 6-8 grade students. Please read through this activity carefully and determine if it is appropriate for your class.



**TIME REQUIRED:** 1 hour

### MATERIALS:

- *Community Background Information* worksheet
- *Community Member Profile* reproducible worksheets
- *Impacts of Disease* reproducible worksheet

## VOCABULARY

### Epidemic

An outbreak of a contagious disease that spreads rapidly and widely.

### Active Immunity

Immunity produced by the body following exposure to disease-causing agents.

### Community

A body of individuals with common characteristics or interests living in a particular area.

### Culture

The behavioral patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought of a society.

### Immigrant

A person who leaves one country to reside permanently in another.

- *Family Identification Pieces* (10)
- Pencils
- Large Writing Surface (Chalkboard, Whiteboard or Butcher Paper)

## PREPARATION:

1. *Community Member Profile* reproducible worksheet: Make enough copies of the *Community Member Profile* worksheet for each group to have one.
2. *Impacts of Disease* reproducible worksheet: Make enough copies of the *Impacts of Disease* worksheet for each student to have one.

*Optional: Teachers may choose to cover the questions found in Sections A and B of the Impacts of Disease worksheet through class discussions.*

3. Write the following on a large writing surface:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Professional Contributions to Community</i>	<i>Other Contributions to Community</i>	<i>Contributions to Family</i>

## INTRODUCTION:

The Passamaquoddy people faced many hardships as they encountered the early Europeans. Discrimination, loss of land, and violence all played a role, but the epidemics of the early 1600s (also known as The Great Dying) dealt the heaviest of blows. As European settlers and explorers began to frequent the Northeast of what is now the United States, their contact with Native Americans often ended with deadly results. Europeans had developed a resistance to the many diseases common in Europe for centuries. As the Passamaquoddy and the Europeans interacted, these diseases began to spread throughout the Native American communities. Unfortunately for the Passamaquoddy people, without prior exposure to diseases such as measles, chicken pox, small pox and other unknown diseases, death was often the end result.

## PROCEDURE:

**This activity  
will provide  
insight  
on the  
devastating  
effects of  
introduced  
diseases.**

1. Divide students into teams with a maximum number of 10 teams. Each team will represent an individual from a family unit living on Elliot Island.
2. *Community Member Profile* reproducible worksheet: Provide each team with a different worksheet and enough copies of the *Impacts of Disease* worksheet for each student to have one.
3. *Community Background Information* worksheet: Read aloud to the class the information on the worksheet found under the heading *Setting the Scene: Your Island Community*.
4. Give students 5 minutes to review their community member profile and identify and list on their *Community Member Profile* worksheet the contributions made by the selected individual to their community and family.

5. Each group selects a representative to state the name of their community member and share two contributions by their selected individual to the family and two contributions to the community. Write these contributions on the board under the appropriate headings (i.e., Name, Professional Contributions, Other Contributions, or Family Contributions).

*Optional: The representative from each group may read their Community Member Profile aloud to the other students prior to providing their contributions.*

6. Read aloud to the class the information on the *Community Background Information* worksheet found under the heading *Disease: The Sickness Begins*. This will inform students that a disease of unknown origin has begun to infect the community and that every member is susceptible.
7. Draw a *Family Identification Piece*. This ID piece represents a community member who has contracted the disease. Due to the serious effects of the disease, the individual who contracts the disease will be temporarily removed from the community and their contributions to the community and family will be lost.

**Discussion Point:**

Refer to the list of contributions on the board and cross out the contributions attributed to this individual. Discuss the impact of each loss on the community and family.

8. Continue selecting *Family Identification Pieces* and discussing the additional losses until 70% of the selected community members are affected (7 rounds).
9. Give students 5-10 minutes to complete the *Impacts of Disease – Part A*

*Optional: You may choose to cover the questions found on the Impacts of Disease worksheet through class discussions.*

measles  
small pox  
chicken pox

**Discussion Point:**

Review *Impacts of Disease—Part A* and discuss the impacts of the comprehensive losses on the community and the future of the community.

10. Introduce the topic of immunity by reading aloud *Resistance: Immigrant Immunity* found on the *Community Background Information* worksheet. Give students 5-10 minutes to complete *Impacts of Disease—Part B*.

**Discussion Point:**

Review *Impacts of Disease—Part B* and discuss the implication of this immunity on the medicinal practices and spiritual beliefs of the affected population.

The arrival of European immigrants coincided with the devastating epidemics that killed an estimated 70-75% of the Native American population in Maine over a three year period.

**WRAP UP:**

Create a parallel between this activity and the epidemics that affected the Passamaquoddy Tribe in the 1600s.

<b>ELLIOT ISLAND</b>	<b>PASSAMAQUODDY</b>
The community was comprised of individuals with different skills and strengths.	The community was comprised of individuals with different skills and strengths.
The primary source of income for Island residents came from natural resources.	Their needs were met by using the natural resources around them.
The discovery of precious metals resulted in the rapid arrival of immigrants with the promise of jobs and money.	The discovery of new land and its resources (i.e., fish, lumber, furs) led to the arrival of European settlers with the promise of money and a better life.
The arrival of the immigrants coincided with devastating illness that affected close to 70% of the original Island residents.	The arrival of European immigrants coincided with the devastating epidemics that killed an estimated 70-75% of the Native American population in Maine over a three year period.
The immigrant population seemed to be immune to disease and benefited due to reduced competition for jobs and resources.	The European immigrants were immune to the diseases and benefited due to reduced competition and subsequent changes in Native cultures.

Discuss the impacts of the disease on the Passamaquoddy Tribe and establish similarities to the students' views expressed on the worksheet. Point out to students that the illness which affected Elliot Island residents in this activity was non-fatal but the epidemics that swept through the Passamaquoddy and other Native American communities were fatal. It is important to convey the devastating consequences that these diseases had on the Passamaquoddy Tribe and for students to understand the long-term effects of losing an estimated 70-75% of the Native American population in Maine over a 3 year span (1616-1619). This equates to the death of more than 7 out of every 10 Native Americans in historic Maine. The diseases were not selective. All members of the Native American population—spiritual leaders, political leaders, elders, healers, hunters, artists, children, parents—were susceptible. To further compound the problem, evidence supports the intentional introduction of disease into Passamaquoddy and other Wabanaki communities by some Europeans through the trade of infected material such as blankets. These introduced diseases were tools used by some Europeans to gain a foothold in the New World. In closing, it is important to bring to the students' attention that even though the Passamaquoddy people faced many hardships, their culture is alive and active today.

*After thorough discussions, establish the parallels between this activity and the events affecting the Passamaquoddy people. Students may need follow up discussions and the opportunity to debrief.*

## ASSESSMENT:

After creating a parallel between this activity and the real events affecting the Passamaquoddy in the 1600s, describe the role that disease played in causing historical changes to the Passamaquoddy culture. Provide 3 changes and their lasting effects.

**TIMELINE CONNECTIONS:** Add the following important dates and events to the timeline of Passamaquoddy history:

- 1500 Early European Fishing Crews, Traders, and Explorers Along the Maine Coast (Contact)
- 1604 First European Settlement in Maine on St. Croix Island
- 1616-1619 Epidemics Strike Native Americans in Maine (The Great Dying)
- 1639 Another Small Pox Epidemic Strikes
- 1980 Pleasant Point Health Center Designated, Funded, and Built
- 2002 Diabetes and Cancer Are Leading Causes of Death on the Reservation Resulting in a Life-expectancy of Only 48 Years

## EXTENSIONS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES:

### Research Opportunity

Direct students to select and research a disease such as small pox, measles or chicken pox, thought to be responsible for the epidemics in the 1600s and/or an illness such as diabetes or cancer that continue to affect many Passamaquoddy people today.